

Community language support in Australia

The RNLD training model





Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity

in-community, participant-driven
training to provide Indigenous
Australians with skills and knowledge
they might need to do their own
language documentation and
revitalisation work

RNLD Community Training Model

Speakers & outline

- **Freya Scott & Emma Murphy**

Historical and political context

- **Amy Parncutt & EbonyJoachim (via video)**

RNLD's role & projects

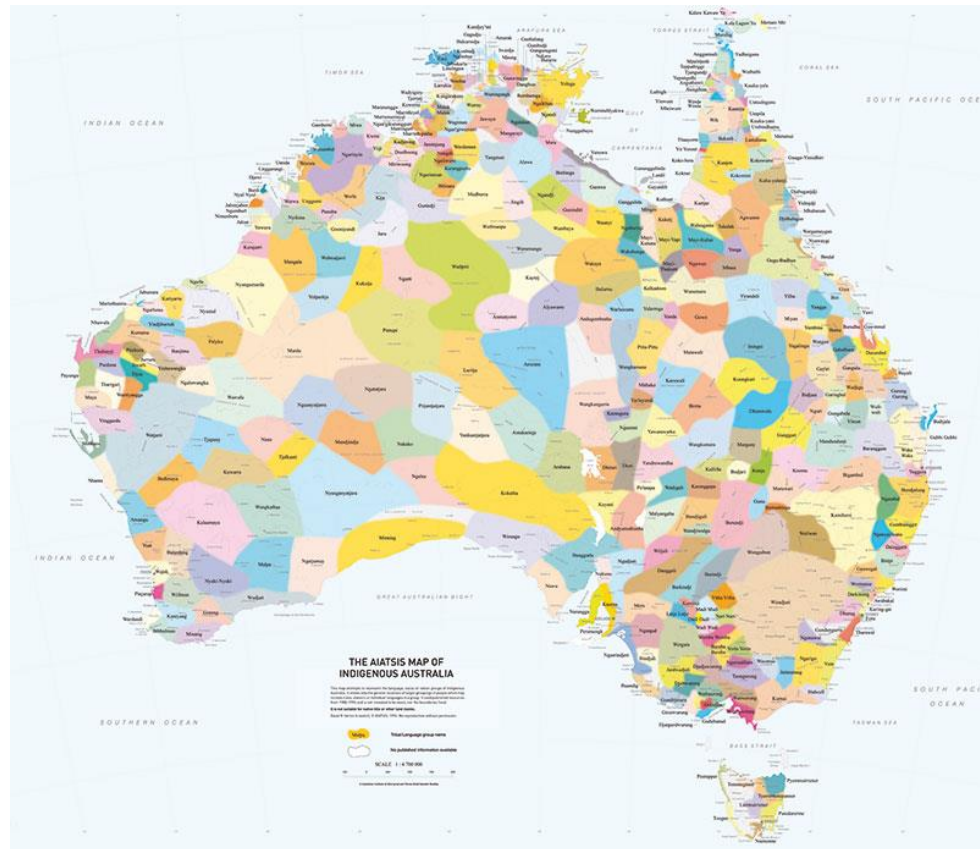
Warning

This presentation may contain photos of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
who have passed away

Many languages pre-colonisation (1788)

371 languages

700-800 inc. dialects & varieties

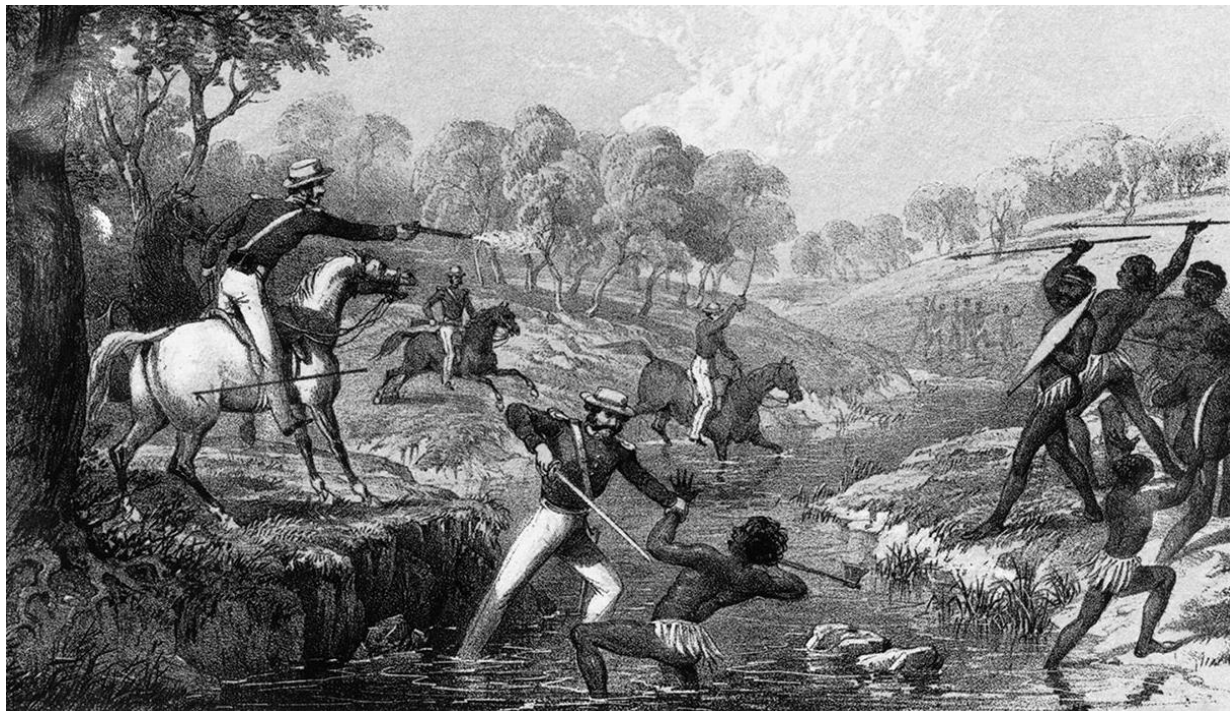


13 languages *spoken by children today*

- ◉ **150 languages** spoken at home
- ◉ **70 languages** have a few hundred speakers
- ◉ **80 languages** have fewer than 50 speakers

Long history of cultural destruction

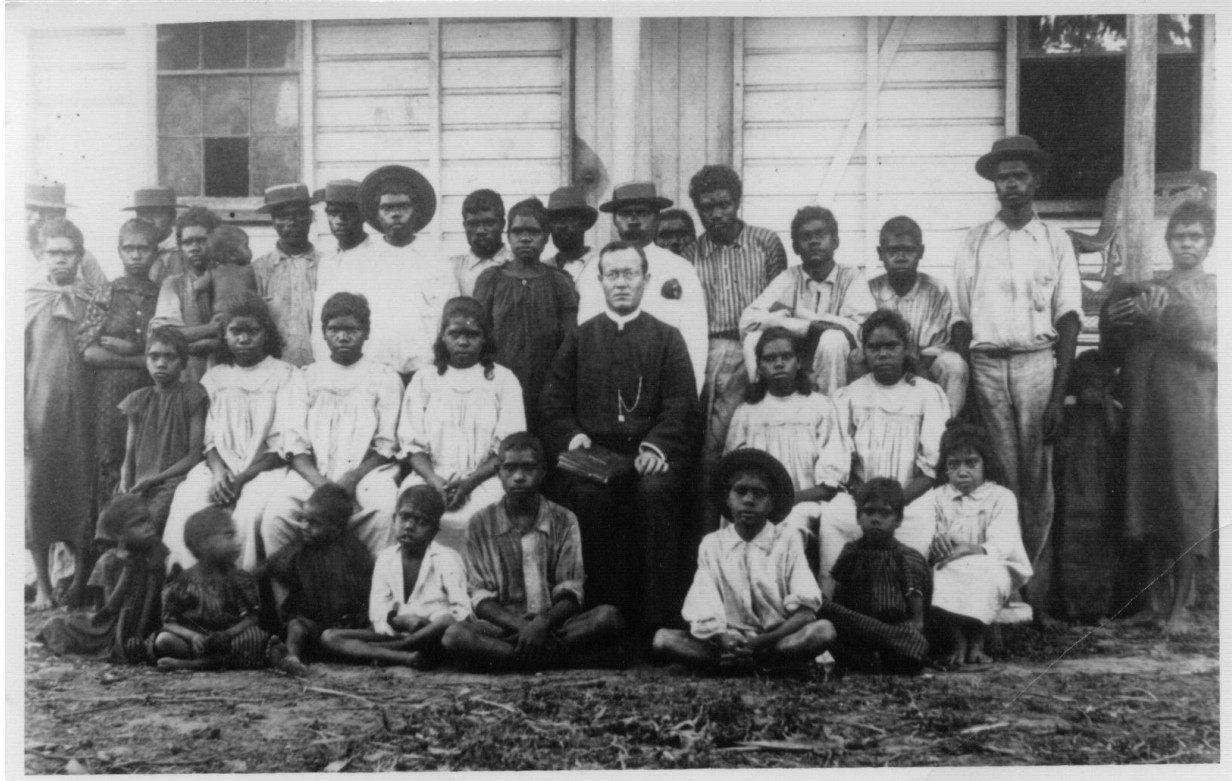
Frontier Wars [1788 -1930s]



30,000 - 60,000+ killed by colonial settlers & officials

Reynolds, *Forgotten war* (2013); Booth, *What are the Frontier Wars?* (2017)

Missions, reserves, stations



- **Forced resettlement** from late 1700s
- Publicised as “**safe havens**” from dispossession

Schools, Aboriginal 'Protection' Acts & Assimilation

- Indigenous languages banned, "devil's language"

Bringing Them Home. Written Testimonies: Confidential evidence 170.



Continued pressure to speak English today

- ◉ Monolingual bias
- ◉ Dominance of English in
 - government services
 - schools
 - media
- ◉ Pressure to switch to English

Despite this...

- Languages are being woken up
- Communities are learning their ancestral languages



Much still remains

- “I see Aboriginal words as a gift — not meaning that we are freely giving them to mainstream Australia for their unbridled use, but rather that, in the face of continual assimilation policies, ranging from Stolen Generation kids being flogged for using lingo all the way to continual threats against bilingual education programs in schools, the fact that we still have words and languages is a miracle.” - Celeste Liddle

Historical context of language work today

- 230 years of colonisation & 230 years resistance
- Campaigns for:
 - Land & water rights
 - Equal pay
 - Protecting Country
 - Practising culture
 - Teaching language
 - Aboriginal control of Aboriginal affairs





Impacts on academia

- ◉ growing pressure to “decolonise academic research processes”
- ◉ linguists as allies & advocates

Where does linguistics fit?

- “For Indigenous communities, reviving language is part of a much bigger picture of reclaiming sovereignty or self-determination”

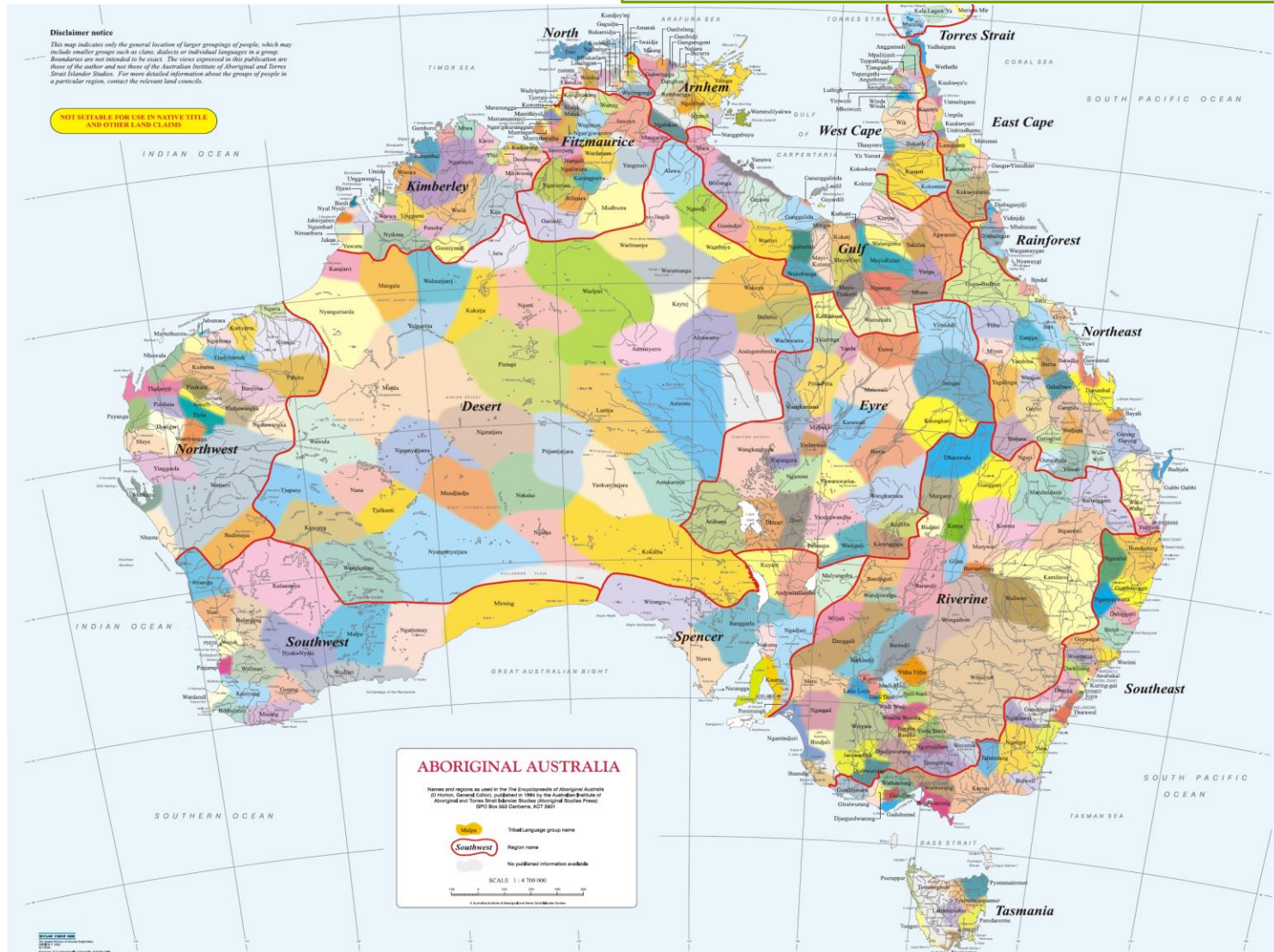
Eira, Addressing the Ground of Language Endangerment

Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity

- 2004: founded by Margaret Florey & Nick Thieberger
- 2009: Received federal government funding
- Since then: 173 workshops – 865 people
– over 100 languages

How do we fit?

- ◉ In-community training
 - ◉ Language project planning
 - ◉ Language learning & teaching
 - ◉ Linguistics
 - ◉ Language documentation
 - ◉ Public speaking & presentations
- ◉ Professional Development
 - ◉ Advanced training
 - ◉ Networking



Sleeping Languages





NOT SUITABLE FOR USE IN NATIVE TITLE
AND OTHER LAND CLAIMS

ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA

Names and regions as used in *The Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia* (D Horton, General Editor), published in 1994 by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (Aboriginal Studies Press)
GPO Box 553 Canberra, ACT 2601

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
|  | Tribal Language group name |
|  | Region name |
|  | No published information available |

SCALE 1 : 4 700 000

David R Horton, iCreator, © Aboriginal Studies Press, AATSIS and Auslig/Sindair, iKnight, iMerz, 1996.!!
Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/>!

Sleeping Languages



Maintenance Languages



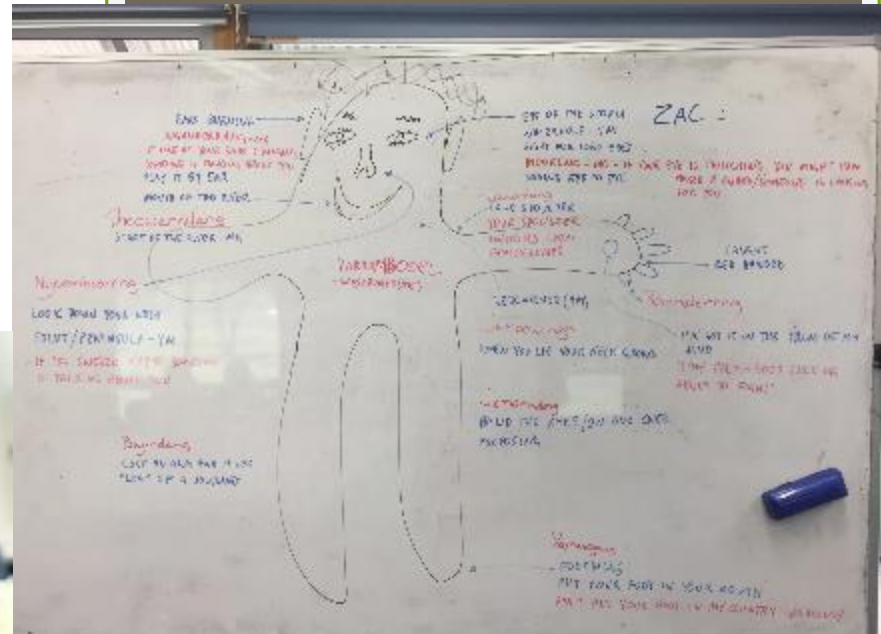
Maintenance Languages

David R. Horton, creator, © Aboriginal Studies Press, A/ATSIS and Ausig Sinclair, Knight, Merz, 1996.!!
Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/>!!



Maintenance Languages



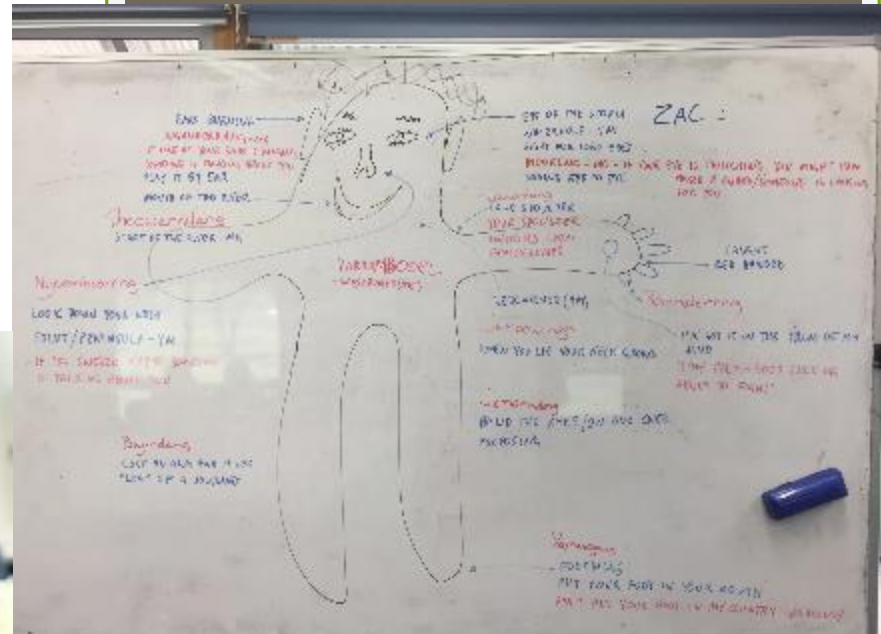


Revitalisation languages



David Horton, creator, © Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS and Auslig/Sinclair, Knight, Merz, 1996.!!
Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/>

A woman with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a blue t-shirt, is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is holding a color calibration chart in her left hand and a pen in her right hand, ready to draw. The background shows a classroom setting with other people and a door.



Our approach

- ◉ Allies *not* leaders
- ◉ *Only* go where invited
- ◉ Participant-led *not* linguist-led
- ◉ Help to use research – *don't* do research
- ◉ Participants = language experts, *not* us

Projects

- Paper & Talk Workshop (Breath of Life)
- Professional Development Model
- Learners' Guide Template Project
- Regional Trainers Initiative

Paper & Talk

- ◉ Partnering with AIATSIS
- ◉ 12-15 people
- ◉ 5 language groups
- ◉ Modelled on Breath of Life
- ◉ Skills and project to take back to community

Projects

- ◉ Paper & Talk Workshop (Breath of Life)
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- ◉ Learners' Guide Template Project
- ◉ Regional Trainers Initiative



Ebony, Hiroko, Coco & the Fitzroy Crossing group, Nov 2018



Ebony addressing “Sorry Day” gathering, February 13 2019



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With thanks to:

Australian Government
Indigenous Languages and Arts

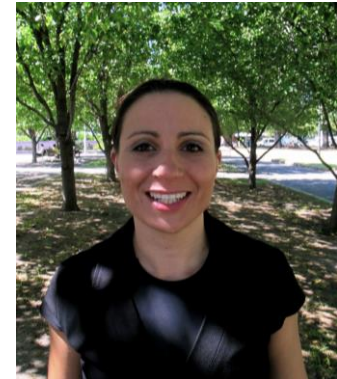
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With thanks to:

Australian Government
Indigenous Languages and Arts



Thank you!

www.rnld.org/ fb: RNLD (Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity)

